Tomorrow night WXDU sponsors the final show of their fall Coffeehouse Concert Series. The event features one of the Triangle's longest established acts, The Pressure Boys, with an up and coming band, Neon Rock Garden, from the mountainous area of the state. Both groups regularly perform in local clubs and offer recent recordings.

Two high schools in the state produce more musicians of note than all others combined. Reynolds High in Winston-Salem gave birth to The dB's, Let's Active, and numerous sound-alikes. Rivaling Reynolds, Chapel Hill High School flooded the area with a much broader range of bands, probably the best known of which is The Pressure Boys. Formed five years ago, The Pressure Boys entertained their classmates from diverse backgrounds, brought from around the world to Chapel Hill by the faculty of University of North Carolina, with internationalist flavoured cover songs by groups such as The Police. After high school The Pressure boys decided they had enough combined talent to get serious about their band. They started writing original songs but again with the same worldly bent as their covers. Most of all the new material incorporated the elements of British ska, itself derivative from Jamaican reggae.

The Pressure Boys' ska stylings proved to be the catalytic spark which set off a wave of local popularity for rock-steady beats. The Boys soon found themselves playing to large crowds from D.C. to Atlanta. Their reputation grew to such a peak when they asked Mitch Easter to record their first EP, Jump! Jump! Jump!, at his legendary Drive-In Studio, he eagerly accepted despite refusing to do the same for many other well respected bands. That 1983 record, pressed by The Pressure Boys' own A-Root-Da-Doot-Doo Records and now a rare collector's item, solidified their renown by becoming a staple of college radio regionally. Major acts travelling into the Triangle from overseas often sought out The Pressure Boys as an opening act. To sustain the attention, the Boys recorded another EP, Rangledoon, the next year again with Easter at the Drive-In and on their own label. Even with only four songs to the six on Jump!, Rangledoon inspired even more popular and critical praise due to an increased maturity of songwriting.

The Pressure Boys did not go unnoticed on the national scene either. This year Epic Records released Unsigned, a compilation featuring the Boys and nine other bands considered to be the best in the country still without major label backing. The compilation was poorly promoted yet sent The Pressure Boys on a nationwide tour. The tour aborted in the Midwest after a much publicized personnel problem (the result of which was the now infamous Rohrwaggon benefits). After coming home The Pressure Boys settled into more songwriting and a new lineup. John Plymale on vocals and trombone and Byron Settle on guitar comprise The Pressure Boys' front line from the original band. The tightest rhythm section in the Triangle, bassist Jack Campbell and drummer Rob Ladd, lay down the backbeat for The Pressure Boys. Campbell and Ladd also appear together with Rod (ex-Arrogance) Abernathy's band, Rod Dash. Ladd is from the original Pressure Boys and this year provided drum tracks on Let's Active's LP, Big Plans For Everybody. Campbell's previous gig was with the late punk-funk quartet Johnny Quest. The big difference, the factor that causes The Pressure Boys to shine above other local bands, is their horn section, Stacy Guess on trumpet and Greg Stafford on saxophones.

The new Boys just recorded an album at Overdub Lane in Carrboro with Easter cohort Don Dixon at the mixing board. A stylistic change accompanies the recording. "We've gone from ska to Oingo Boingo," says Campbell. The new record, tenatively entitled Plaid Cat Rooster, will be released next year on A-Root-Da-Doot-Doo Records barring any major label interest. The Pressure Boys' first two EPs will also be rereleased in a second pressing. Campbell promises a "severe tour when the record's out" reaching beyond the 930 to 688 circuit.

The western part of the state is lesser known for great rock groups. But that may soon change with the rising visibility of Neon Rock Garden. NRg (their lower case) began as a collaboration between guitarist Tina Pinnix and bassist Gene Preble three years ago. The pair recorded an EP entitled Suicide Song in 1985 with a drummer and second guitarist who quit before the record's release. Pinnix describes the sound of the band then as a blend of American and British punk. WXDU program director Raoul Duke reviewed the record with comparisons to Get Smart, The Neighborhoods, The dB's, and "The Connells trying to do a Descendents' tune."

NRg's search for a new drummer had a fortuitous conclusion. They found Alex Floyd whose previous band, The Living, had made a demo tape at the Drive-In. Floyd introduced Pinnix and Preble to Mitch Easter who agreed to produce the next NRg record. Four songs were recorded at the Drive-In. The original intention was to release the songs as an EP. But as with with many struggling new bands, the financial backing only supported a seven inch single, "Never Listen" backed with "Don't Say Baboon." Thanks to Easter's touch, the new single has a more pronounced pop feel. NRg will also be featured on the upcoming "First-Aid" compilation record benefitting Citizens Against Censorship.

The doors to the East Campus Coffeehouse will open at 10pm Friday night for The Pressure Boys/NRg show. Admission is three dollars with a Duke identification card and four dollars for the general public. Although the last show for this semester, WXDU will host a concert every Friday next spring at The Coffeehouse. The Connells and Measure For Measure play The Coffeehouse on January 16. The Friday afterward marks the appearance of The Graphic with The Suspects. January 30 Southern Culture On The Skids boogies with Soul Train. And look for UV Prom with Snatches Of Pink on February 6.

- Chris Calloway
Special Events Coordinator, WXDU